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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to investigate the current status of post-tenure faculty evaluation in the community college. Questionnaires were mailed to 1,290 tenured and non-tenured faculty and 421 administrators at 9 community colleges. Study findings, based on a 50.1% response rate, included the following: (1) 77% of the respondents indicated that formal post-tenure evaluation existed at their institution; (2) 56.8% of the administrators and 45.9% of the faculty worked at institutions where the primary stated purpose of post-tenure evaluation was faculty development and improvement; (3) 59.1% of the administrators and 49.6% of the faculty reported that the primary stated purpose, as well as their own preferred purpose for pre-tenure evaluation, was to provide information for personnel decisions; (4) classroom effectiveness and contributions to department/division were the criteria receiving the most emphasis in the post-tenure evaluation process; (5) respondents tended to disagree that criteria used to evaluate tenured faculty and non-tenured faculty should differ; (6) both faculty and administrators strongly agreed that there should be multiple sources of input in evaluations; and (7) 50.2% of the respondents indicated that post-tenure evaluation results were shared with faculty members, who were then personally responsible for correcting weaknesses. Major study recommendations and conclusions are included. (LAL)

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## POST-TENURE FACULTY EVALUATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: ANOMALY OR REALITY?

Converging economic, cultural, political and demographic elements in the higher education environment have coalesced recently to create general interest in the topic of post-tenure faculty evaluation. A recent search of related literature uncovered philosophical and theoretical support for the concept of post-tenure evaluation, but very little descriptive data related to the process and practice of post-tenure evaluation was uncovered. For the community college, it was almost non-existent. A recently-completed study attempted to fill this research void by investigating, then describing the current status of post-tenure faculty evaluation as it specifically related to the community college.

**Methodology**

The research sample consisted of community college institutions belonging to the League for Innovation in the Community College. Nine colleges out of this eighteen member consortium agreed to participate. A survey questionnaire was constructed and administered to faculty and administrators in the participating institutions. This questionnaire sought to determine if formal post-tenure evaluation exists in community colleges; what the primary purpose for post-tenure evaluation is; what sources of input are utilized; what criteria are utilized; how effective the post-tenure evaluation is perceived to be; what differences of opinion exist between tenured and non-tenured faculty and administrators relative to the purpose and process of post-tenure evaluation; and what changes can be suggested to improve present faculty evaluation plans. [Of 1290 questionnaires mailed to tenured and non-tenured faculty and 421 mailed to administrators, a total of 856 were returned--50.1 percent.]

**Findings**

1. Over 77 percent of the respondents indicated that formal post-tenure evaluation did exist at their institution, and approximately 94.8 percent agreed there should be post-tenure evaluation.
2. The majority of administrators and faculty (56.8 percent and 45.9 percent respectively) worked in institutions where the primary *stated* purpose for post-tenure evaluation was faculty development and improvement. Furthermore, when asked what *should be* the primary purpose, the results showed little change, with the majority of administrators and faculty (44.2 percent and 36.3 percent) indicating that the desired purpose should be for faculty development and improvement.
3. Interestingly, both administrators (59.1 percent) and faculty (49.6 percent) reported that the primary stated purpose, as well as their own preferred purpose for pre-tenure evaluation, was to provide information for personnel decisions. Thus, a difference in purposes for pre- and post-tenure evaluation was reported.
4. The criteria most frequently used in the post-tenure evaluation process as cited by both administrators and faculty were: classroom effectiveness (66.5 percent), contributions to department/division (51.0 percent), attendance and reliability (49.9 percent), campus committee work (49.5 percent), course or curriculum development (44.2 percent) and innovation in teaching methods (42.3 percent). Of these criteria, classroom effectiveness unanimously received the most emphasis in each institution's plan. When asked, "Which criteria in an 'ideal' post-tenure evaluation process were preferred as the most influential?" the respondents chose the same top five criteria that they indicated were presently being utilized. However, the majority of respondents indicated that changes were needed in the evaluation criteria to better accommodate individual faculty interests and department/division priorities.
5. There was general disagreement that the criteria used to evaluate tenured faculty should differ from the criteria used to evaluate non-tenured faculty.
6. Both faculty and administrators strongly agreed that there should be multiple sources of input to post-tenure evaluation including administrators, peers, students, and self. The data also indicated that the respondents worked in institutions that presently provide for multiple participants in the process with the department/division chairperson almost universally rated as the key participant.
7. A majority of respondents (50.2 percent) indicated that the post-tenure evaluation is shared with the evaluated faculty member but that the faculty member is then left to his/her own devices to correct any



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weaknesses. Following from this, other cited problems associated with post-tenure evaluation plans were the lack of a significant reward system for outstanding performance (52.7 percent) and ineffective implementation of a faculty development plan to complement post-tenure evaluation (38.8 percent).

8. In terms of effectiveness, the majority of respondents indicated an uncertainty about the effectiveness of post-tenure evaluation in accomplishing its stated institutional purpose. Further questioned, the majority indicated that the post-tenure evaluation system does not provide an effective mechanism to measure competence or incompetence. As might be expected, the respondents also indicated that 1 percent or fewer of all post-tenure evaluations in the last five years have been unsatisfactory.
9. Recommendations made for changes in present post-tenure evaluation plans included the following:
   a. Evaluation should be more supportive and less threatening by more emphasis and direct tie to faculty development.
   b. Criteria for evaluation should be more specific and objective, helping to reduce subjectivity.
   c. A substantial reward system should be developed.
   d. Student involvement should be increased.
   e. Frequency of evaluations should be decreased with option that evaluation will occur if circumstances warrant.
   f. Evaluation plan should include criteria related to individual faculty/divisional goals.
   g. Evaluation needs more rigor and clout to be taken as a serious process with consequences.
   h. Evaluation plan should include evaluation criteria related to individual faculty and/or divisional goals (growth contract concept).
   i. Peer involvement should be increased.

**Recommendations**

Insofar as one can generalize from this sample to the community college population at large, these findings suggest that formal post-tenure evaluation as a process is a reality in the community college sector. However, the data do not support the notion that it is an effective process. Therefore, the following recommendations bear consideration:

1. Post-tenure evaluation needs to have a direct linkage to a formalized faculty development program. Institutional resources must be available to provide growth and remediation opportunities. Likewise, rewards as well as consequences need to be clearly established. If such development opportunities and rewards are not available, institutions should critically and seriously question the value of even engaging in the process of post-tenure evaluation.
2. The growth contract concept should be re-evaluated and re-examined as a means to allow a tenured faculty member, working in conjunction with his/her supervisor, the opportunity to develop an individualized plan of work and/or to mutually agree upon the criteria to be used in the evaluation.
3. Since pre-tenure performance is an integral factor affecting post-tenure performance, serious consideration should be given to an extension of the probationary period to allow time for a more thorough assessment of a faculty member prior to the award of tenure.

**Conclusion**

Designing and operationalizing a post-tenure evaluation process that nourishes faculty growth, recognizes faculty accomplishment and fosters faculty improvement is no easy task. Sufficient financial and manpower resources are requisite. In the final analysis, an individual institution must decide if such a process is feasible given the varying constraints incumbent upon it. However, if we continue to support the notion--which so many have for so long--that the faculty is the "university," then institutions facing ever-aging and immobile faculty must out of necessity address the issue of faculty vitality and the quality of faculty worklife.

Based on the present study, post-tenure evaluation--when driven by faculty input, accompanied by adequate institutional resources, and designed specifically for the purpose of faculty development--finds support among community college faculty/administrators and is seen as a viable strategy for institutional renewal.

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor
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